



Fangs for the memories

To honour the release of *Angel* Season Two and *Dracula 2000*, we're taking a look at the best fang-filled flicks on DVD. They're bloody great...

WORDS: TOM BOURTON

Never afraid to get their teeth stuck into a juicy new format, vampires have really got a taste for DVD over the past couple of years. With fangs at the ready, the bloodsucking beasts have taken the format by the scruff of the neck, injecting fresh life into its veins with a transfusion of exciting movies. Of course, DVD isn't the first medium to fall victim to the seductive but deadly onslaught. Vampires may avoid the sunlight, but their history has shown that they love to hog the limelight.

Bloodthirsty spirits were first reported in ancient Babylon but, as early as the 11th century, tales of vampires began to appear across Europe and Russia. The

idea caught the public imagination and soon established itself as one of the most feared mythical creatures. In 1428, a leader was born, as Vlad Dracul (literally Vlad the Devil) fathered a baby boy, Vlad IV (aka Prince of Wallachia; aka Vlad the Impaler; aka Dracula) who soon gained notoriety for his cruelty and his alleged penchant for feasting on his victims.

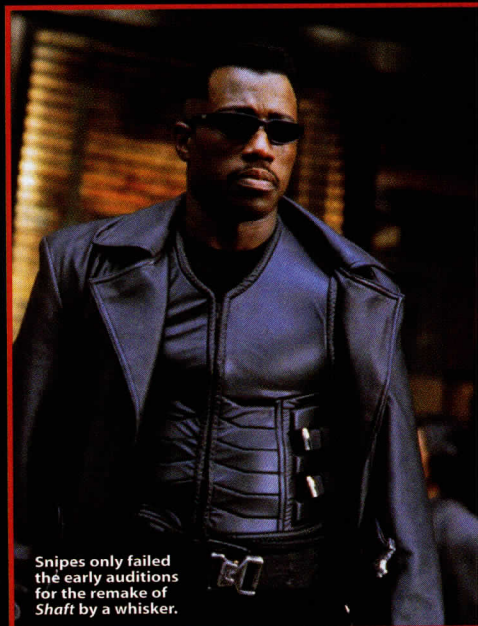
Over the next few centuries, the vampire legend grew, popping up in China, Italy and Ireland and devouring all media before it, appearing in poems, plays, operas and short stories. Finally, in 1897, the evil Vlad rose from the grave and into immortality with the publication of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Vampires suddenly found themselves thrust into the public arena and immediately fell

in love with their new-found fame.

Ever since 1922's *Nosferatu* and Bela Lugosi's *Dracula* in 1931, vampires have never been far from the big screen. But, while the stereotype may have been set by Christopher Lee attacking young girls in nightdresses (he doesn't wear the nightdresses, they do), the genre has more depth than just Hammer Horror. Once feared for their ferocity and love of the dark, it's now these characteristics that make vampires such popular fodder for movie-makers. So popular are the night settings and urban gothic panoramas of the vampire world, you can see their influence in an array of other movies, from every stalker/scream film to the moody streets of Gotham.

Giving vampires the edge over their less photogenic ghoulish rivals, the suckers have enjoyed a bit of a makeover as the years have advanced. In the past few years, likes of Tom Cruise, Salma Hayek, Brad Pitt and Wesley Snipes have added star status and serious sex appeal to the mix – while victims used to scream as their killers approached, they could now be forgiven for swooning. Admittedly, the vampire myth has always gone hand in hand with epic love (after all, *Dracula* was just a fool in love) but we've come a long way from Bela Lugosi.

Another reason for the continued popularity of the vampire movie is its universal heritage. The vampire legend has stood the test of time, and any writer or director has a vast array of material to build upon. Once you've got in a few references to sunlight, garlic, stakes to the heart, mirror reflections (or lack of them) and crosses, the movie is nearly over. It's so simple, it's brilliant. Now get ready to invite these fleshy morsels into your home on DVD...



Snipes only failed the early auditions for the remake of *Shaft* by a whisker.

BLADE

RRP \$32.95 **RATING** MA
STARS WESLEY SNIPES, KRIS KRISTOFFERSON,
STEPHEN DORFF **DIRECTOR** STEPHEN NORRINGTON

What happens? Updating the vampire story, Blade (Snipes) is a new breed of half-vampire, who has superhuman powers and can wander about in daylight. On the downside, he has to keep injecting himself with garlic. Blade's nemesis is the traditional evil vampire Deacon (Dorff), who sees mortals as food and wants to take over the world. Right from a colourful start in a blood club, the phenomenal action scenes are fast and furious. Oh, and there's a very funny fat man.

Who are the vampires? Everyone except Kristofferson.

Why buy the disc? The transfer is detailed and vibrant, and has a stunning Dolby Digital 5.1 mix, as well as extras that include an alternative ending and behind the scenes footage.



THE FORSAKEN - DESERT VAMPIRES

RRP \$34.95 RATING MA15+

STARS KERR SMITH, BRENDAN FEHR, JOHNATHON SCHAECH
DIRECTOR J.S. CARDONE

What happens? Unmitigated trash. Sean (Smith) is driving to his sister's wedding when he picks up a hiker, Nick (Brendan Fehr), who just happens to be a vampire hunter, tracking down a group of youthful neck nibblers that feed on travelers. They run into Megan, who has been left for dead by the vampires. Sean gets the hots for her, but gets infected with the vampire virus. Drag.

Who are the vampires? Lost count.

Why buy the disc? Ideal after a drunken Friday night. Includes deleted scenes and a featurette.



THE LOST BOYS

RRP \$24.95 RATING M

STARS KIEFER SUTHERLAND, COREY HAIM, JASON PATRIC
DIRECTOR JOEL SCHUMACHER

What happens? Mixing the vamp legend with the tried and tested "strangers in town" storyline, a one-parent family moves to a neighbourhood which turns out to be full of vampires. The movie wasn't a critical success, but has a cult following, and is good fun as Haim and his buddy turn into vampire hunters to save big bruv from the biker suckers.

Who are the vampires? Most of the locals.

Why buy the disc? Dolby Digital 5.1 and a trailer add appeal to what is an entertaining and stylish movie that you probably remember fondly.



FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

RRP \$34.95 RATING R18+

STARS GEORGE CLOONEY, QUENTIN TARANTINO
DIRECTOR ROBERT RODRIQUEZ

What happens? After creating a tension that most movies would be proud of, this film throws its kidnap drama plot in the bin and launches a full-on vampire assault. Bloody and exciting, pitching the vampires against the ruthless (but mortal) Gecko brothers (Clooney and Tarantino). A heady and fast-paced rollercoaster of a flick, packed full of violence and quite a few good laughs.

Who are the vampires? Everyone in the bar.

Why buy the disc? The picture is really detailed and the soundtrack will blow your system away.

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA

RRP \$34.95 RATING M

STARS KEANU REEVES, GARY OLDMAN, ANTHONY HOPKINS

DIRECTOR FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA

What happens?

A dramatic and fairly faithful adaptation of the novel that started it all, this epic tale is as gothic as they come, and brings the nobility and love back to the story as we travel between Transylvania and London. Contrary to Dracula's popular bloodthirsty image, this movie even conjures up a sympathy for the devilish Count, as he attempts to rekindle his enduring love for his deceased wife

Elisabeta. The costumes are fantastic and Coppola's direction is masterful.

Who's the vampire?

Gary Oldman, natch.

Why buy the disc?

A stupendous version of the movie, with all the detail you could hope for, as well as an evocative 5.1 mix and a bevy of extras.



No matter how long he lived, this look wasn't going to come around again.



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER - SERIES ONE BOX SET

RRP \$69.00 **RATING** M
STARS SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR
DIRECTOR STEPHEN L POSEY AND JOSS WHEDON

What happens?

The recipe for *Buffy*'s success is painfully simple. Take one attractive starlet, throw in a handful of equally pretty young friends, then stir in several lumbering and generally stupid monsters for them to kick the bejaysus out of. As a spin-off from a moderately successful (to put it kindly) teen movie, the writing, characterisations and storylines have all improved dramatically since Season One of the TV show, but the basics are the much same and will ensure that the *Buffy* legacy will remain with us for many years yet.

Who are the vampires?

The monsters with the big teeth and the alarming foreheads.

Why buy the disc?

The chance to enjoy *Buffy* at the touch of a button (as it were) should be enough to convince you that you can't resist this box set.



Tom got Nicole's hair in the divorce.

INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE

RRP \$28.95 **RATING** M
STARS TOM CRUISE, BRAD PITT, CHRISTIAN SLATER, ANTONIO BANDERAS **DIRECTOR** NEIL JORDAN

What happens? Drawing heavily on the classic traditions of the vampire myth, this adaptation of Anne Rice's vampire chronicles is a rich addition to the genre as it shuns excessive blood-letting, and focuses on the loneliness and anguish behind the tortured life of a vampire. Speaking to a journalist, the 200-year-old Louis (Pitt) describes his boredom, his desires and his relationships with other vampires, especially

with his creator Lestat (Cruise) and his creation (Kirsten Dunst).

Who's the vampire? Everyone except Christian Slater.

Why buy the disc? Lush cinematography and an intelligent soundmix enhances a powerful movie on a grand scale that revels on DVD.



FRIGHT NIGHT

RRP \$34.95 **RATING** M15+ **STARS** CHRIS SARANDON, WILLIAM RAGSDALE **DIRECTOR** TOM HOLLAND

What happens? Meet Jerry Dandrige. Hes sweet, sexy, and he likes to sleep in late. You might think he's the perfect neighbour. But before inviting Jerry in for a nightcap, there's just one thing you should know Jerry prefers his drinks warm, red - and straight from the jugular! Sarandon plays the seductive vampire and William Ragsdale is the frantic teenager struggling to keep Jerry's deadly fangs out of his neck.

Who are the vampires? Chris Sarandon

Why buy the disc? Moderately scary and amusing. Not many extras, a photo gallery and teaser trailer.



NOSFERATU

RRP \$28.95 **RATING** PG
STARS MAX SCHRECK, ALEXANDER GRANACH, GRETA SCHRÖDER **DIRECTOR** F.W MURNAU

What happens? Count Orlok is depressed. He's bored with bloodsucking the local populace. So, he decides it's time for a change. He sets sail for Wisborg with a poor innocent called Hutter. Along the way he dabbles in some nibbling, leaving the ship a floating morgue. Everyone needs a hobby. Once in Wisborg he prowls the streets baring his fangs and snacking on human flesh. Oh, but what hours he keeps.

Who is the vampire? Count Orlok

Why buy the disc? There aren't many extras, but this disc is a must-have for any true vampire fan.



SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE

RRP \$28.95 **RATING** M15+
STARS WILLEM DAFOE, JOHN MALKOVICH, CATHERINE MCCORMACK **DIRECTOR** E. ELIAS MERHIGE

What happens? A devilish take on the making of the F.W Murnau classic *Nosferatu*. Malkovich plays Murnau, who is so hellbent on making an authentic horror film that he hires a real vampire named Max Schreck (Dafoe) to play the part of Count Orlok. Murnau promises Schreck the neck of star, Greta Schroeder (McCormack), after filming ends. Murnau says to his crew that the reason Schreck looks so odd is because he's a method actor.

Who are the vampires? Schreck/Count Orlok

Why buy the disc? A very witty film. Disc has animated menus and cast/crew bios.